

REPORT V

SOME OF OUR MISTAKES AND THEIR CORRECTION.

1. We have seen the economic perspectives put before the people by the government and their disastrous effects on the people and the working class. We have seen the achievements of our class and its future needs. We have seen the way the political parties work in the working class and T. Us. We have seen the disruption and division that the bourgeoisie has carried out in organisation and unity of the working class. We have seen the tasks that our T.U. leadership has to carry out, the key task being to work for and achieve unity.

2. In carrying out the tasks, the crux of which lies in building the unity of the working class and the trade unions, besides knowing the moves of the ruling classes, the struggles and achievements of the working class and their lessons, as stated above, it is also necessary to understand how the Party and the trade unions led and advised by it, functioned, where and how they behaved correctly and where they made mistakes.

T. U. Unity

3. In building T.U. unity it is also necessary to understand the character of the organisations and their leadership, with whom we try for organisational unity. It is necessary to lay down the *dos* and *don'ts* in achieving unity from below as well as from above.

4. It is more or less an acknowledged fact that the Communist pioneers with the help of the non-Communists built the early mass T.U. movement in India and achieved many a great gain for the working class.

5. The ideas of class consciousness, the national and international solidarity of the working class and the duties following from them, were consciously built up from an early period.

6. Mass Trade Unions were brought into existence and the initiative of the workers by building working-class cadres, was developed.

7. Unions were built on industrial basis and democratic mass functioning developed through mill-committees, departmental groups and leaders etc.

8. Political education and action of the working class was organised through the Party.

9. At the same time the Party as such did not become a mass party of the working class, drawing upon all the gains of the struggles and the growing industrial and political consciousness of the masses.

Our Isolation

10. The political leadership of the masses in the national liberation movement was not seized by the pioneers and the party, due to inadequate understanding of the programme and the tactics in relation to the national struggle, the role of the bourgeoisie and its parties and the democratic front.

11. The trade unions led by the Party got isolated, or split because of the organisational-political mistakes and the onslaught of repression from the British Government and its bourgeois allies in India in the period of 1930-35.

The lessons of the split of 1929, the split of 1930 between the AITUC and the Red TUC are worth noting in this respect.

12. The tactics of eliminating reformist influence over the working class, of boldly leading its struggles when workers from below are ready while the reformist leadership hesitates and gets isolated and tactics on the question of building the revolutionary trade union movement, as laid down by the RILU, were wrongly understood and applied in the AITUC and the Red TUC in this period.

Breach Healed

13. But soon the corrections were made, a unity movement was launched, and the development of united struggles of workers and correct approach to the reformist and national-bourgeois leadership healed the breach in 1938.

14. As a result, on the eve of the Second World War in 1940 the AITUC and its T.U.s. were highly organised, they had a mass base, membership and good cadres. All political parties except the Congress stood inside the fold of the T.U. movement of the united AITUC organisation, though differing with each other and

struggling against each other on political and even industrial matters.

Tactical Differences During War

15. The Second World War and the differences in tactics among the political parties in relation to the war and the role of the working class again threatened us with division and disunity on T.U. questions.

16. The Congress bourgeoisie and its wing in the T.U. movement were not prepared to fight for the defence of the working class against the burdens of the war, while the C. P. I. and other parties and groups were conducting such struggles for the defence of the working class.

17. When the war switched over to a new phase in 1941 and the C.P.I. called for the defence of the Socialist State of the world's working class—the Soviet Union—no party openly took an opposite position. Even the Congress leadership had to advocate support to the defence of Soviet Union and China in their 1942 resolution. But the differences arose on the question of the application of this position.

18. On Trade Union questions, on the question of strikes in defence of working-class interests, serious differences arose. The C.P.I. advocated a line of not encouraging strikes or settling them as quickly as possible if they arose in order to facilitate the defence against Fascism.

19. However, in practice, slogan of defence against Fascism was mechanically applied, because the Party leadership underestimated the strength of the USSR and the resistance movements, over-estimated in panic the strength of imperialism, forgot to note that while mouthing phrases of support to their Soviet ally, the Anglo-Americans sabotaged aid to the Soviet Union and were only guarding and trying to strengthen their colonial bases against the postwar crisis.

Reformist Deviation

20. The mistake lay in not combining the defence of the interests of the working class and people with the interests of the defence of the Soviet Union and the anti-Fascist war.

21. As a result, in the T.U. field, when the national bourgeoisie and the British attacked the workers' standards of living

and the workers demanded leadership from us in their defence, we either lagged behind, or gave wrong slogans or in some cases even deserted the struggles.

22. Our mistakes in tactical application of our line, our mistakes on the T.U. front in the matter of the defence of the interests of the workers weakened our T.U.'s and lost us many of our large bases of the working class.

23. The bourgeoisie and its Right and Left Parties, the Socialists and others took advantage of our mistakes in order to isolate us from the working class.

24. But even in this period, where we stuck to mass work, in relation to famine relief, rationing of food, demands for dearness allowance, and occasional strike struggles, which broke over our heads, we retained our mass bases.

25. But these were retained generally in areas and industries where we had not led furious class battles before and where the workers had only recently come to consciousness and organisation, as for example in some areas of the South.

26. Our serious losses were in the areas and industries where we ourselves had imbibed the class and anti-imperialist outlook into the worker and had led determined mass battles on his behalf, as for example in Bombay, Kanpur, etc.

27. Thus the division in the working class, our isolation from the class in major areas followed from our political line and its working out in the T.U. field.

28. *Reformism was the main deviation in this period.*

29. At the end of the war, the leadership of the Congress utilised its new influence in order to attack the Party and destroy it.

War-time Strike Wave

At the same time, the working class rose into determined struggles in order to overcome its losses during the war. The biggest strike wave began.

30. The new strike wave put forward demands of quite a far-reaching nature.

They demanded not only wage increases and bonus but also living wage, 8 hour day and social security.

All trades and strata of workers were drawn in these struggles. They were extremely militant in their character.

In some areas, as in Travancore, they even defended the worker with arms in hand, as in Punnapra and Vayalar.

As a result of the weakening of imperialism and the rise of the colonial liberation movement, even the armed forces composed of Indians sympathised with the strikes.

The economic and political strikes got combined and in many cases, the whole population joined in the strike struggles by hartals as in the Post and Telegraph Strikes and the Calcutta Hartal.

31. Though the Party had jumped into the new strike wave it still suffered from the remnants of the previous reformist outlook.

Hence, we did not react swiftly to the new situation to put the Party and the T.U.s. in fighting trim.

32. As a result, the Right-wing Socialists, or Trotskyites and other elements stole the leadership as in the case of the Madras Binny Strike. But the lag was soon overcome.

33. The serious strike wave frightened the bourgeoisie, because it immediately began to affect its profits. While it wanted to use the masses for a compromise with imperialism and for destroying the C.P.I., it also wanted to stop the advance of the working class both economically and politically.

The AICC of 1946 sympathised with the demands of the working class but warned it against strike struggles.

34. What was the workers' attitude to us in these strikes—economic and political?

They would strike unitedly and as our Party cadres were the best and fearless organisers, they would welcome them. The typical remark of welcome would be: "Now our quarrel is over. We can join in the common, struggles, though for your own political reasons, you left us before".

35. A serious inner-party struggle had to be waged to overcome reformism but there were no serious difficulties in the way, as the upsurge was helping us to overcome it. The development of the upsurge, however, to its logical conclusion was hampered in many cases.

Sectarian Adventurism

36. After the Calcutta Congress of the Party, the leadership failed to assess the situation correctly and in the name of bold leadership of working-class struggles and its hegemony, it took

to *sectarian adventurism*, which became the main deviation of this period.

37. It was facilitated by the fact that the strike wave had not subsided. The bourgeoisie opened an offensive of suppressing the workers' struggles by the Industrial Disputes Acts, Essential Services Acts, the Detention Act etc. Firing, killing, prisons and police rule was the main weapon of the Congress leadership to suppress the workers.

38. At this time, we should have been doubly careful in guarding unity of the working class because (i) we had not overcome the distrust of the masses towards us born out of the war period, (ii) the Right Socialists and the Congress had disrupted T.U. unity by starting rival organisations, (iii) the workers had national-bourgeois illusions about the Congress and the Socialists, (iv) sufficient time and opportunity had not been given for the worker to disillusion himself about the role of the Congress Governments, (v) the new worker in the industry had not gone through the fire of class-battles and had not tested by his own experience the various parties and leaderships, (vi) the bourgeoisie when faced with strikes was making concessions to the workers, which still further bred national-bourgeois illusions, viz., the concessions to Railway workers in 1946, the grant of Bonus payment of 4½ months' wages as in Coimbatore, Bombay, etc., the application of D.A. scales in various areas. These were gains the influence of which we underestimated.

39. The leadership of the party turned sectarian and bureaucratic. Where T.U. comrades reported the mood of the masses correctly, it instituted a militarist bureaucratic discipline in place of democratic voluntary discipline. The failure of strike slogans was attributed to failure of individual cadres to act; the latter were expelled and thereby the Party and T.U.s weakened.

The outstanding example is 9th March 1949.

Weakening of Party & TU's

40. Unions were split in the name of isolating the reformists without seeing whether the masses walked out with us or remained with the reformists and Right-wing Socialists.

41. The concessions made by employers and their actual influence were never assessed in order to give lead to the workers.

42. Slogans were subjectively evolved and did not flow from assessment of objective conditions.

43. Trade Union and Party work was almost made identical forgetting the warnings of the International.

44. The lessons of the RILU were perverted and wrongly applied as in the February '49 document.

45. Mass T.U. work was given up in the name of *politicalisation* of the working-class.

46. Unity of the workers was made a phrase, by giving calls of joint actions in terms of most rude, hostile, bitter criticism of those very forces with whom we called for unity.

47. To give a call of strike at all costs alone was considered the attribute of revolutionary trade unionism, without reference to the preparedness, and mood of the masses, and the state of organisation, and the objective justifiability or appropriateness of the call.

48. These in short are some of the mistakes on the T.U. front made by the Party, which, coupled with the violent suppression by the Congress Government, led to the disruption of our Trade Unions and the set-back to the working class.

Attempts at Correction

49. The correction came in 1950. The left-sectarian adventurism was removed from the leadership.

50. But sectarianism in understanding of the situation and tactics appropriate to it had not been properly nailed down. The pronouncements of the Asian Conference were sought to be mechanically and wrongly applied and hence the inner-Party struggle continued.

51. The reflection of this partial correction and partial continuation of the sectarian deviation can be found in the December 1950 letter on Trade Unions to Party ranks.

While calling for reorganisation of T.U. work and struggles of the working-class, both in its legal and illegal forms, it held the perspective of illegal union work as the main form, advocated the "lie low" policy in the towns in view of "fascist repression." This kind of approach was facilitated by the fact that savage repression against the Party and the trade unions led by it continued in the Congress regime.

The letter, therefore, while opening the way for correct reorganisation of T.U. work left enough room both for sectarianism by allowing emphasis on mainly illegal T.U. work and on the other hand for reformism by talking of "lie low" policy.

52. The adoption of the New Programme and Tactics of the Party, and the events following from it have now cleared the way for correct and proper work in the T.U.s.

53. At the same time, one has to be watchful because in T.U. work, the reflection of the inner-Party struggle, the remnants of the various deviations, persist due to the absence of unification of ranks and common understanding being not yet achieved.

54. This reflection takes various forms. Because we have not yet been able to get the T.U.'s of the AITUC going with live, direct contact with the masses, which was formerly broken, we are not able to assess the mass mind correctly and in time. Because the Party has been deprived of cadres, we are not able to measure the situation in time and quickly by our contacts, by our studies of industry, finance etc. Because of lack of mass contact, we are not able to measure the exact influence of the INTUC and the Right-wing Socialists and many a time have to depend on the spontaneous action of the masses in order to know the trend of their mind and the grip of certain demands and slogans.

55. This inability is used by the remnants of the various deviations in the party for factional ends. It hampers T.U. work, and repels new cadres coming to the Party and the T.U.'s.

When to Launch Struggles

56. Having seen the disastrous effects of irresponsible strike calls of the sectarians in the past, the genuine Party worker wants to exercise *caution* before launching such a call and struggle. Knowing the disruption and disunity in the T.U.'s and the division of the workers under the three main organisations, INTUC, HMS and AITUC, our genuine worker wants to wait and see what the other two leaderships are reacting to.

In the absence of real mass contacts and organised T.U. work, he does not know where this waiting and this caution should end and a struggle launched on his own, or where he should support others, because he is doubtful, if even the others know the masses and are honest in their defence of workers' interests.

57. In such a situation when the masses act spontaneously or the other leaderships launch struggles and masses respond, the sectarians come out of their hiding and use the caution of the

T.U. leaders to attack them as reformists, deserters, etc. They use this not in order to see how to devise new means to correct *over-caution*, the legacy of their own adventurism, but to use it for factional ends. This is one malady.

58. Another malady is that when the genuine worker, seeing the crisis, wants to advance slogans of struggle and action in reply to the attacks of the bourgeoisie and the government, the remnants of reformists oppose him as sectarian, taking advantage of the fact that sectarians in the past have used struggle-slogans most irresponsibly. And when a struggle is launched but fails, the reformist attacks the genuine workers as sectarian-deviationists and uses the fact for his factional ends.

59. This happens because neither the hardened sectarian nor the hardened reformist have cured themselves but use this or that mistake of the genuine worker for their factional ends.

60. Since 1950, there is *no main deviation* in the party. But in one or the other unit, union or area, the remnants of both trends being there, T.U. work does suffer from them.

Live Mass Contact

61. What are the mistakes we are likely to commit now? Not having live mass contact and organised cadres working right inside the factories on a large scale, we are not able to feel the pulse of the workers and know their grievances in concrete. Hence we do not react swiftly, when the masses want us to lead them in struggles. This can be corrected only by genuine T.U. work on a mass scale, in the residential areas, where we cannot enter the factories, and in the factories where we can get entry, if not by recognition at least through our T.U. membership.

62. Having the sectarian adventurist effects still in mind we are likely to be *over-cautious* in leading the workers' struggles and *lag behind*.

63. The need for struggles forced on the workers by the attack of the crisis of the economy may again throw us into the arms of sectarian adventurers. The need for rebuilding T. U. organisation, trying for unity before struggles are launched on our own, the need for using legal means of the industrial laws before acting in defiance of them, the need for readiness to negotiate and conciliate, where possible and win demands even through arbitration, is likely to be overlooked and land us into *running ahead* of the workers and the people.

64. Thus both mistakes have to be guarded against. However, we cannot at present say that any one deviation is a main deviation in the Party or that the Party leadership in the T.U.'s is suffering mainly from a deviation. Our main task is, therefore, to evolve correct methods of mass work, T.U. functioning, defence of workers' interests and struggles, on the basis of unity as the key weapon as well as an immediate aim.

65. What steps should we take in order to correct the situation, build a strong T. U. movement and achieve the demands of workers?

All T. U. cadres must get into close contact with the workers, employed and unemployed, through mohalla-basti contacts or factory.

Formulation of Demands

Cadres must lay down minimum daily tasks on T.U. front, including all aspects of the workers' life.

They must equip themselves as outlined before.

They must keep track of the mass mind in its reaction to the food situation and the crisis and their day-to-day demands.

Demands in each trade and industry must be carefully formulated. Formulation of extravagant demands must be avoided.

In the name of *fundamental questions* and *exposure of the bourgeoisie* it is the sectarian habit to frame demands which are not reasonably attainable and make the worker look ridiculous in the eyes of his allies in the people.

All available means of unofficial and official conciliation should be tried and if possible a settlement achieved to mitigate the effects of the crisis on the workers' standard of living, employment and wages.

Not to settle on any account and to push the workers into strikes at all costs in the name of *steeling the workers in the fire of struggle* was the sectarian habit which led to fruitless strikes in some cases though it must be remembered that not all failures of settlement or strikes were due to that line alone.

Legal Formalities

66. The legal existence and formalities of a union must be guarded with care though impossible and anti-working class conditions must not be agreed to secure recognition under the law—

such as agreement to compulsory arbitration and no-strike clauses.

It may be remembered that in 1948 we lost the valuable recognition of the MES unions because under the influence of sectarians, we refused to accept the obligation of holding a ballot before strikes and agreeing to certain other conditions in view of the services being concerned with military engineering.

In the event of failure of conciliation, measure the readiness of the workers for further action, by means of meetings, or ballot or where these are not permitted by consultation with leading cadres, and if they agree do not hesitate to launch a strike. If they do not, do not launch a struggle just because you feel otherwise.

Before launching a struggle observe all the necessary laws, if they are applicable to your industry regarding notice etc.

Before and after launching the struggle cultivate non-working class opinion in your support. This must be carefully done especially in such trades as municipal services, transport, domestic, lighting etc.

After launching the struggle keep ready for negotiation and try on your own to open avenues for it.

Whether the strike has to be half day, one day or prolonged depends on the preparedness of the workers and the unity of the leadership.

Be vigilant against blacklegs and provocateurs.

Guard the Cadres

Nowadays every strike is followed by banning of meetings, arrests of leaders etc.

We must guard our cadres and leaders. Who and how many should depend on the state of the organisation.

Even in ordinary T. U. work, cadres have to be guarded. Even when we have legal unions and do legally permitted work, there is victimisation by employers, unlawful detention by government etc. We must be vigilant against these attacks also, especially when workers launch strikes for their demands.

In strike meetings exaggerated reporting should not be done. Handbills should be sober, educative, simple, not jargonised, and to the point. They should be full of confidence and of militant and rousing nature but this should not amount to hurling boastful challenges, using language which can easily haul us under the law, as some of our handbills have been in the past.

When we are trying for unity, we have to be doubly careful in criticising the leaders and members of the rival organisations, or those who differ from us on the given tactic. The resolution of the Working Committee of AITUC of May 1949 on the deserters is a model of how such a resolution should *not* be.

Defend the workers' struggle fearlessly but do not hesitate to settle or call off when necessary. False notions of prestige or victory and defeat should not blind us to the mood of the workers and their strength. There should not be a premature panicky call-off nor a pig-headed sectarian stick-on. The situation for one or the other has to be measured by experience and skill. There is no ready-made rule for this.

Defence of workers' interests includes defence against police terror and violence of the employers' gangs. How to do it depends on the particular situation, readiness of the people to suffer and to act.

Armed clashes with the state forces should, however, be avoided, under present conditions.

Forms of Struggle

Importation of Satyagraha forms in strike struggles should not be encouraged, though today in some cases, the worker and the middle-class employee under the influence of past traditions easily takes to such suggestions. If in certain circumstances such forms can help to initiate mass mobilisation, we should not hesitate to use them but with caution and care.

We have to guard against the provocateurs, who try to disturb disciplined peaceful action by anarchic action to facilitate government repression.

But just because we ask for peaceful conduct of strikes and resistance, it does not mean, we should preach the principles and theory of non-violence, as the bourgeoisie wants us to do.

Above all, be guided by the masses, by their experience, and skill while giving them also guidance from the standpoint of ours as a leadership.

Differentiation Between Big and Small Industries

67. In formulating and fighting for the demands of the workers do we make any difference between the Indian employer and the British, and also between the small and the big?

Under the present circumstances, our first task is to defend the workers' standard of living and conditions of work, his wages, employment etc., against every employer whether British or Indian, big or small. The starting point and level of demands is always conditioned by the fact that the employer is big or small, because the technical and employment conditions of large-scale industry and its profits capacity are generally better than that of small-scale industry. But the crisis affects the small more quickly and severely than the big.

In struggles, however, the big resists more severely than the small and can last out longer. The government machine protects the big more than the small. Our tactics must be guided by this but only as tactics to win demands and with as little suffering for the worker as possible.

Hence in order to win relief for us quicker, to move the public towards us, and in order to defend the general interests of the country and the people, we should where necessary combine the demands of the employer against the state or the foreigner with our demands against him and propose joint campaign etc. But, the political antagonisms between the big and small, between the Indian and foreign as also our organisational-ideological prestige and strength have not advanced today to that level, where the national bourgeoisie will combine in a united front with us on the basis of common understanding. Hence, we should not go into mechanical generalisation and application of experiences elsewhere regarding the differentiation between big monopoly and small industry or national bourgeois and foreign. Though we may not neglect to take note of the antagonisms as in the case of leather, mica, small power engines etc., today we must concentrate on protecting the worker and his interests first. Only when the workers grow strong and powerful will the bourgeoisie come to ask for differential treatment, which should then deserve our serious consideration.

68. We must remember that the antagonisms which raise the question mentioned above flow under conditions of Anglo-American drive for war.

Hence, the crisis and its solution, our demands and their fulfilment raise directly the question of the peace movement. For this each industry and trade and each demand and struggle has to be properly placed in the context of the general class economy and specially the war economy and its effects, and our demand for Peace and trade with all countries without discrimination.

Worker-Peasant Alliance

69. The question as to how to relate the workers' T.U. struggles with those of the Kisans depends on the area and industry and the state of organisational and ideological preparedness of both the workers and the peasants concerned. While we should bear in mind the necessity for this and also the other points mentioned in the previous report, we need not elaborate on the question further in this report.

It must be remembered that no amount of detailed instructions can ever take the place of mass experience and the ability and skill to use it in building T. U. and defending the demands of the working-class.